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Migration Studies in Austria – Research at the Margins?

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Migration Studies in Austria – Research at the Margins?

Introduction¹

The organisers of the conference have asked the authors to concentrate on the following questions:

- Are there national paradigms of migration research? One or many? And are they contested or widely shared?
- Is migration reflected as a part of the changes in social-structural development?
- What is the role of the organisational and funding structure?
- Is there a mutual influence of research and politics?

Before dwelling on these questions, I would like to add some considerations on the idea and meaning of “paradigm”. The traditional concept of “paradigm” has been shaped by Thomas Kuhn’s analysis of scientific developments, where a paradigm is seen as a shared set of concrete solutions to central problems in a specific scientific field guiding the work of the scientific community committed to the paradigm because of training and institutional rules. According to Kuhn, intellectual progress is not shaped by scientific logic and advancement, but by intellectually violent revolutions leading to a paradigm shift, a new world-view on existing problems, often brought forward by academic outsiders or scientists critical to the established rules in academia (cf. Kuhn 1962).

For this understanding of paradigm, the existence of an institutionalised academic discipline with a well-formulated subject, specific methods and clear demarcation lines to the outside world is a precondition. Nowhere in academia migration research has established itself as such a kind of discipline, at best the issue of migration is accepted as an important area of research for different disciplines. On the contrary, migration research often is defined as an “interdisciplinary” endeavour, which, like many interdisciplinary activities, frequently leads to scepticism within the academic communities of the established disciplines.

Due to these considerations I would rather prefer to analyse the situation of migration research in terms of competing narratives than of paradigms, where the concept of a narrative is characterised by an intermingling of discourses in different social fields, e.g. academia and politics. Thus we might not find one single “grand narrative”, but a layer of different (hi)stories reflecting the interaction of academic and political development in the field. At least this is the case in Austria.

¹ This paper was first presented at the conference “National Paradigms of Migration Research” at the University of Osnabrück on December 14, 2002. The style of an oral presentation has been maintained for the printed version.

One paradigm or many?

Given the importance of immigration to Vienna, Lower Austria and Vorarlberg in the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century on the one hand and the history of emigration on the other, one could imagine that migration research should have a long academic tradition in Austria. The opposite is the case. Neither the thick history of emigration nor the more recent waves of immigration since the end of the second world war received a lot of attention in the academic world. Only some ten years after Austria had started to recruit labour migrants under a guestworker scheme in the late sixties and early seventies, the first studies on migration were contracted.

The political background of immigration policy at this time was mainly characterised by two aspects: The overwhelming influence of the social partners in the field of migration policy on the one hand and the idea of organising labour migration according to a principle of rotation on the other.

Until the end of the 20th century, the elaborate system of social partnership has been a main arena of policy making in Austria. In the areas of labour market and social policy neither the political parties in parliament nor the government, but the social partners – mainly the Chamber of Labour and the Trade Unions on the one hand and the Chamber of Commerce and the Association of Industrialists on the other – were the decisive actors. Based on personal, formal and informal linkages to the government, the parliament and the two larger parties², the social partners were able to transform their politics into parliamentary decisions. The unions secured their influence within the workforce by pursuing an insider-policy focusing on male workers with Austrian citizenship in stable employment and downplaying the interest of women and immigrants (cf. Talos 1993).

For the government the inclusion of the social partners secured the broad acceptance of decisions in the field of economic and social policy, moderate unions and a virtually strike-free economy with the trade unions forming a part of the government system and not of the opposition, as in many other European countries. Two parties never had been a part of the informal elite-cooperation in the system of social partnership: The Freedom Party and, later, the Greens – both of which turned migration policy into a central parliamentary issue in the eighties (Bauböck 1997: 683).

Ironically, a conflict about immigration of foreign labour stood at the beginning of social partnership in the early 1960s, when the Austrian economy was struck by severe labour shortage (cf. Wollner 1996). While the Chamber of Commerce pressed for recruitment of labour from abroad, the Trade Union Federation and the Chamber of Labour strongly opposed it. Due to hardened front lines no agreement could be reached in the first instance. In this situation, the Chamber of Labour and the Unions used their bargaining power to increase their influence in the central negotiation arena within the social partnership, the “wages and prices commission” in exchange for the acceptance of a first temporary immigration agreement for 47.000 “guestworkers” for the year 1961. The unions pressed

² The president of the Trade Union Federation and the president of the Chamber of Labour and the Chamber of Commerce regularly held seats in parliament. Furthermore, many functionaries of the social partner organisations held leading positions in their respective parliamentary group, and up to the end of the nineties the minister for labour and social affairs always has been a high ranking functionary of the Trade Union Federation.

for a system of rotation privileging Austrian citizens. “Guestworkers”, as they were called, should have the right to equal pay, but should only get one-year contracts, and each year a new contingent for immigration should be negotiated between the social partners. In the case of job-losses non-Austrian workers should be dismissed before their Austrian colleagues. In the following years, the Chamber of Labour and the trade unions used the yearly negotiations of the contingent of foreign workers as lever to increase their influence within the social-partnership regime (Böse et al 2001: 3). The initial social partnership-agreement of 1961 remained the determining framework for further regulations of immigrant labour market access up to the eighties. In the seventies, Austria developed a system of restricted labour market access for immigrants transforming them into an easily dismissable labour market reserve. The main tool of labour market control was an elaborated system of work permits, which made immigrants more vulnerable than other groups on the labour market, as they needed at least five years of employment to receive an unrestricted labour permit, which could be lost again in case of prolonged unemployment.

The guest-worker system with its idea of “rotation” in reality never worked. Employers did not want to recruit inexperienced personnel, as long they could rely on trained staff, and most immigrants, who themselves often also believed in a short period of stay, could not earn enough to start the desired business in their home country. Thus most immigrants decided to stay longer and brought their family members to Austria. Since the beginning of the seventies, family immigration surpassed new labour immigration, and Austria became a de-facto immigration country, although the authorities still denied this fact (Böse et al 2001: 2).

Despite these developments, a labour market approach dominated migration policy until the end of the eighties. Thus the social partners stayed the main actors and the Ministry for Social Affairs was the only responsible authority. The unions, which by inclusion into the system of social partnership, had become a part of the system of government, did not open their structures for immigrants, but instead focused their activities on workers and employees holding Austrian citizenship. They stayed inactive with regard to the exclusion of non-Austrian citizens from passive voting rights at the shop floor level, so immigrants did not enter their ranks and files. Instead of opening their own political structure, the unions and the chamber concentrated on funding migrants’ sports and cultural associations (cf. Gächter 1995: 47). One of the most pertinent effects of Austria’s “guestworker” policy was the development of an ethnically segmented labour market with immigrants occupying the lower positions of the occupational hierarchy even in the second and third generation and the development of an immigrant underclass.

In this political context, the first studies published in the early eighties signified two opposing trends of thought still influential in this research area. Whereas Elisabeth Lichtenberger’s monograph on “Guestworkers – Living in two Societies” 1984 positively echoed the guiding political principle of migration policy and focused on the socio-economic position and the assimilation of immigrants, the first study on “Foreign Labour in Austria” (Wimmer 1986), commissioned in 1982 by the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Science and Research and carried out by the Austrian Institute for Economic Research and the Institute for Advanced Studies, questioned the concept of rotation.

The study explained the development and implementation of Austria's guestworker-policy by the overwhelming influence of the social partners in that field of policy and criticised that both social partners jointly had decided to make use of immigrants as a puffer on the labour market to reduce unemployment of the native workforce. Confronted with the results of the study, the funding ministries – both headed by a Socialdemocratic minister – raised serious concerns about the “lack of objectivity” and even threatened to withdraw funding.

This study did not only mark the beginning of migration research in Austria but also stands for the beginning of a tradition of highly politicised research challenging governmental migration policies. Most of the researchers contributing to this studies had come from the academic left, some of them had privately been involved in action groups in favour of immigrants. Until today, there is a split in the research landscape between a more economically or demographically oriented research, which tries to avoid political connotations, and research referring critically to the state of migration policy in Austria.

Are paradigms contested or widely shared?

Again this question has to be answered with regard to migration policy and migration research history. Two areas of discourse, the growing influence of demographic and of normative arguments in the eighties and early nineties, have to be mentioned here. Both of them cannot be understood without a short reference to major changes in the political setting of immigration policy in the late eighties and early nineties.

As already mentioned, until the end of the eighties immigration policy was part of labour market policy with the social partners and the Ministry for Social Affairs as the main actors. Following the epochal changes in the political setting of Europe in the beginning of the nineties and the huge influx of refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Ministry of the Interior came onto the scene and became a proactive player, defining immigration as a problem of internal security (Sohler 1999). This view was fostered by the largest influx of immigrants Austria had ever experienced: Between 1987 and 1994 the resident immigrant population more than doubled from 326.000 to 713.000 (Böse et al 2001: 5). The prevailing system of migration control by way of labour market regulation was unable to cope with this new situation.

Even more important than the shift of actors were the dramatic changes the established “two and a half”-party system was undergoing. In the mid eighties, the Freedom Party, which had oscillated between a liberal and a rightist and nationalist faction and never had gained more than 5-6% of the electorate for years, was taken over by Jörg Haider, who started to turn the old Freedom Party into a far right mass party. From the beginning, anti-immigration positions with racist undertones were a major issue of the Freedom Party. On the other hand, the Green Party gained momentum and campaigned for a better legal position for immigrants and a liberal immigration regime. Both parties never had been a part of the social-partnership elite-consensus and did not feel bound by the traditional interests shaping migration policy. So they were free to use the issue to sharpen their political profile. Migration policy, which before had been decided behind the closed doors of the social partners, was

transferred into the parliamentary arena and became a major public issue in the nineties (Bauböck 1997: 684ff.).

The shift of migration policy into the parliamentary arena led to a short phase of scientific and political discussion on the future of Austria's migration policy. Between 1989 and 1992, the Ministry of the Interior together with the Chancellery initiated several dialogue groups including civil servants, migration researchers and intellectuals. One outcome of the dialogue was a draft of an "immigration law" suggesting a system of immigration control instead of the existing labour-market regime and an equalisation of the legal status of immigrants and natives after a few years. The break-up of Yugoslavia and the huge influx of refugees from Bosnia stopped this short phase of rational discourse. Now the risk of mass-immigration from Eastern Europe became a central issue, and the Freedom Party gained considerable support for its anti-immigration policies. Similarly, trade unions and all parliamentary parties except for the Greens defined control of immigration, and not integration, as their major goal.

In the end of the eighties a new subject entered the arena: The ageing of society. A study commissioned by the City of Vienna, which at that time was envisaging a continuous decline of population, was the first to use demographic arguments in favour of controlled immigration (Anatalovsky 1990). Leading demographers like Heinz Fassmann and Rainer Münz argued to accept the reality and try to develop a quota-system for immigration aimed at compensating the foreseeable loss of population with its dramatic consequences on the pension and the health system (Fassmann/Münz 1995: 10). The idea of migration as a means of demographic planning found acceptance among the government, which had realised that the existing mode of migration management via control of the labour market was inefficient. The discussion led to the implementation of a new immigration control regime based on yearly set immigration quotas, but without improvements of the legal status of immigrants.

Already in 1987 the existing labour market regime was amended introducing a percentage quota to control access to the labour market. The maximum percentage of employment of foreign citizens was set at 10% (later lowered to 8%), with a complicated procedure for overdrawing the quota. Between 1991 and 1993 a comprehensive reform of the existing legal migration regime came into force. The idea behind the reforms was to prevent the use of the asylum procedure as door to immigration and to regulate new immigration not via the labour market, but via a quota regime, which should be adapted yearly. Contrary to immigration countries employing quota regimes, the right to residence in Austria was not connected with the right to access to the labour market, and the existing labour-market quota system only underwent minimal reforms. Thus legally resident immigrants – especially young people, women and self-employed – often were not allowed to work. Beyond that, the new law stipulated new income and housing thresholds as preconditions for residence. In contrast to official declarations, the new acts also applied to legal residents in the country without giving any credit to that fact. Bad housing, long-term unemployment or the omission to apply for the prolongation of an existing residence permit in time often led to the loss of one's residence rights and the need to apply for a residence permit anew and from the country of origin (Bauböck 1997: 686).

The drastic consequences of the new laws did not only raise protest among human rights organisations, but also led to a new interest in the field of migration and integration in research. It might not be by chance that in the beginning of the nineties legal scholars and political scientists started to compare the Austrian legislation with international norms and developments in other European countries and began to work together with centres of legal research in the Netherlands and Germany. On the other hand, the strong legal division between natives and foreigners in Austria also aroused growing interest in the then developing discussion about theories of citizenship. In the early nineties the Department of Political Science at the Institute of Advanced Studies in Vienna became a focal point of citizenship studies in Austria. Rainer Bauböck's habilitation thesis on "Transnational Citizenship" (1994) was the first in a series of publications in the area of comparative citizenship studies financed by the ministry of science and directed by Rainer Bauböck. This research involved former scholars of the department and actively reached out to the international scientific community by organising conferences and by publishing in English. Two theoretical strands received growing attention: Citizenship studies in the tradition of Thomas H. Marshall (1965) and Tomas Hammar (1990) and theories of racism in the tradition of British cultural studies. The early nineties also saw a reorientation of the reception of theory: Whereas German research had been the main reference point in the books and papers written in the seventies and eighties, now the Anglo-Saxon discussion became much more influential. This was partly a result of the fact that several researchers had got grants for British universities and partly due to a re-import of British cultural studies through the German publishing house "Argument-Verlag".

The normative focus on theories of citizenship also shifted the discussion about the integration of immigrants from the older labour-market paradigm to a more political paradigm. In fact, it questioned the adequacy of nation-state-citizenship as a solution to integration and served as a new framework for the academic discourse. "Citizenship" is maybe the only uncontested research paradigm among migration researchers, and there might even be a normative consensus about the need to enlarge citizenship rights to immigrants within the research community.

Citizenship studies also formed a major part of the research programme on "xenophobia" of the Ministry of Science from 1996–2001. As this programme also included regular lectures of renowned British scholars, like Robert Miles and Stuart Hall, the prevailing orientation on research in the German speaking world was replaced by a growing interest in the British and American tradition of theory-building. A second large research programme of the Ministry of Science on "Cultural Studies" with a strong focus on British and American theory-building reinforced this reorientation.

The high degree of involvement of researchers in human rights NGOs and the significant growth of right-wing-extremism and xenophobia in Austria in the nineties as well as the development of new forms of self-organisation of immigrants from Africa and Asia were reflected by the reception of the international debate about the concept of "racism", especially among younger scholars and students. Whereas term "racism" in the social sciences had only been used in the context of the national-socialist regime in the seventies and eighties, in the mid nineties the concept of "cultural racism" entered the discussion.

Further to the research programmes of the Ministry of Science, the focus of the European Union on antidiscrimination policies and the funding of antiracist networks and research were a highly influential factor in developing a “migration research community” in Austria. In this area, mostly young researchers at non-university institutes, who are often also activists of the European Network against Racism or other policy-oriented NGOs, were developing a new area of discourse strongly linked with the reception of cultural theory and postcolonial approaches. These discourses are currently held at the fringe of academic migration research but have gained intellectual influence over the last years (cf. Görg/Pühretmeyer 2000). This influence is not at all reflected by funding or within the traditional academic institutions. The main source for studies in this area are not national or European research programmes, but action-oriented funding of the European Union, like the programme-initiative “Equal” or the budgets for activities against racism and discrimination. It remains to be seen whether this “paradigm” will be able to secure its place in the highly innovation-resistant traditional academic landscape in Austria, when EU-funding in this area will be reduced.

Are there blind spots in migration research?

Autochthonous and immigrant minorities in Austria face a completely different legal and social framework with regard to their cultural rights. The legal term used for autochthonous ethnic groups is *Volksgruppe*. Whereas the 1976 Ethnic Groups Act (*Volksgruppengesetz* BGBl. [Federal Law Gazette] 396/1976) and other legal provisions guarantee a set of cultural rights to the autochthonous minorities, there are no such rights for immigrant ethnic groups. On the contrary, the legal provisions governing naturalisation and the right of residence directly and indirectly demand assimilation to the “Austrian way of life”. The Ethnic Groups Act does not apply to immigrant minorities (cf. Baumgartner/Perchinig 1995).

The Ethnic Groups Act guarantees the preservation of the ethnic groups (*Volksgruppen*) and stipulates that their language and national characteristics (*Volkstum*) should be respected. An ethnic group (*Volksgruppe*) is defined as those groups of Austrian citizens traditionally residing (*wohnhafte und beheimatet*)³ in parts of the Austrian state territory who speak a non-German mother tongue and have own national characteristics (*Volkstum*). The federal state recognises its obligation to subsidise measures that safeguard the existence of the ethnic groups and their national characteristics. Members of the minority groups have the right to use their mother tongue with the authorities in the areas where they live. Furthermore, education in their mother tongue – bilingual schooling – is granted in certain areas.

Special advisory bodies comprising representatives of the different ethnic minorities, the so called *Volksgruppenbeiräte*, were set up at the Chancellor’s office to advise the federal government on minority policies and the distribution of subsidies for the organisations of the representative ethnic

³ The term *beheimatet* cannot be translated into English. It has its roots in the right-wing and anti-liberal tradition of *völkisch* thinking, where *Heimat* (home) does not just mean place of residence, but also the adherence to a traditional and exclusionary model of society. See also Jochen Blaschke: *Volk, Nation, Interner Kolonialismus, Ethnizität. Konzepte zur politischen Soziologie regionalistischer Bewegungen in Westeuropa*. Berlin 1985, 31 - 67.

minorities, the *Volksgruppenförderung*. This body is intended to safeguard the cultural, social and economic interests of the ethnic groups and is composed of representatives of the minorities, political parties and the religious groups. The implementation of these rights often is prevented by reluctance of politicians and/or, as in the case of the Carinthian Slovenes, a strong nationalist climate with organisations like the “Kärntner Heimatdienst” acting as vociferous and influential anti-minority pressure groups. Nevertheless the importance of group-rights for the autochthonous minorities is an accepted fact, at least at the level of the federal government (cf. Baumgartner/Ellmeier/Perchinig 2001).

There are no similar legal provisions safeguarding the cultural rights of immigrant ethnic groups. On the contrary, the naturalisation law and Austrian residence law implicitly favour assimilation. According to the 1988 Naturalisation Act (BGBl. 124/1998), the “integration of the applicant” is the most important criterion for the granting of naturalisation. The internal regulations of the provincial government of Vienna understand “complete integration” to imply fluent knowledge of German, a sound professional education and proven activities for the coexistence of the indigenous and immigrant population in Vienna (Wiener Integrationsfonds 1999: 43). Until 1998, the naturalisation law demanded “assimilation to the Austrian way of life” as a precondition for naturalisation. How can this different treatment of diversity and pluralism be explained?

Here a look at the “grand narratives” of Austrian nation-building might be helpful. The first narrative concerns the destruction of the First Austrian Republic by civil war in 1933, leading to the Austrofascist regime and the “consenting occupation” by Nazi Germany in 1938. The related narrative tells a story of society sharply divided by class, region and religion, where both the socialdemocratic and the conservative “camp” were unable to solve conflicts of interest in the parliamentary arena and instead resorted to violence leading to civil war. This incapability to forge a consensus on the future of Austria, so the narrative, was the base for the high level of support for the NSDAP in Austria and later allowed Nazi-Germany to consentingly occupy the country.

This division, so the foundation narrative continues, was overcome in the national-socialist concentration camps, where both conservatives and social democrats were jailed and decided to build a new state after liberation based on cooperation and peaceful conflict-resolution overcoming the old cleavages. Cleavages, which, after all, had not only been defined in political, but also in cultural terms by both “camps”. The Austrian Socialdemocrats of the First Republic always had understood themselves as a political as well as a cultural movement shaping a new way of life ranging from housing styles to clothing and greeting – modes confronting the majoritarian catholic culture, whereas the Conservatives had a strong leaning towards political catholicism fostering a catholic and rural lifestyle associated with folk customs and traditions. In the twenties and thirties, nearly all areas of life were pillarised according to these two camps. Up to the seventies a learned could tell a person’s political affiliation from the name of their car insurance. And even today, greeting with “Grüss Gott” in the (socialdemocratic) Viennese City Hall and “Guten Tag” in the (conservative) Chamber of Commerce may lead to a penetrating glance.

The reduction of the differences between the two camps, so the narrative continues, was one of the major political successes of the late chancellor Bruno Kreisky, who together with the then archbishop Franz König forged a new understanding between the Catholic Church and the Socialdemocratic Party. Thus in the seventies and eighties, integration mainly meant to overcome the political and lifestyle differences between the two former camps by opening up access to education and raising mass incomes. The institution of “social partnership” was seen as a major tool to accomplish this appeasement. Homogeneity in everyday culture should help to overcome the traditional conflicts between the two competing camps, thus cultural pluralism was not seen as an asset, but as a threat.

But this story carries a hidden subtext: In the twenties, the conservatives and the developing German nationalist camp were united by antisemitism, which both used to campaign against the Socialdemocratic government in Vienna, denouncing “red Vienna” as dominated by Jewish influence. As the high degree of participation of the Viennese population in the atrocities against the Viennese Jews during the Nazi-occupation shows, this propaganda was successful, and antisemitism was spread wide into both “camps”. After the liberation from Nazism in 1945 the consecutive Conservative-Socialdemocratic coalition government jointly decided to block restitution as far as possible and soon began to compete for the support of former Nazis, whereas no move was made to invite the survivors of the Holocaust back to Austria. Instead, the definition of Austria as the first victim of Nazi Germany became the second “grand narrative” of Austrian nation building after 1945. In this context, a reference to “cultural pluralism” was a hidden reference to the destroyed Jewish tradition of Vienna, and the agreement to overcome the traditional cleavages by fostering (class)cultural homogeneity also included a hidden agreement not to touch on Austria’s involvement into the Holocaust. So the founding myth of the reconciliation of the two camps of the interwar period merged with the myth of Austria as the first victim of Nazi Germany and effectively silenced further public discussion on this topic.

In this context, conflicts involving the autochthonous minorities were mainly seen as destabilising the newly reached societal consensus. Within the academic left, which, although critical, nevertheless supported Kreisky’s government, the leading discourse was not a discourse on cultural pluralism, but, following the reception of Gramsci, on cultural predominance. “Cultural pluralism” and “multiculturalism” as political concepts entered the arena of discourse only in the early eighties, at a time, when most politicians still had been socialised in a tradition emphasising the risks of cultural pluralism.

But in the sixties and seventies the narrative of a new Austria did not go uncontested by the former predominant narrative of Austria as a part of the “Deutsche Kulturnation” (“German cultural nation”), which was strongly associated with NS-ideology. The passing of the Ethnic Groups Act in 1976 can be seen as the culmination point of the fight between these two competing narratives leading to the inclusion of the autochthonous ethnic group into the prevailing narrative of a new Austrian nation.

Linguistic rights for both the Carinthian Slovenes and the Croats of the Burgenland had been guaranteed in Article 7 of the Austrian State Treaty of 1955, which constituted an independent Austrian State. Their implementation into the State Treaty had been a result of the strong involvement of

Carinthian Slovenes in the fight of the Yugoslav Partisan Army against the army of Nazi-Germany, whereas a majority of the German speaking Carinthian population did not oppose or supported the Nazi-regime, and the support for demands for linguistic rights during the negotiations of the State-Treaty by Yugoslavia and the Soviet-Union. After the end of the war, Yugoslavia had demanded parts of the province of Carinthia as their territory, and had withdrawn these demands after an agreement of linguistic rights for ethnic minorities in Austria was reached.

The implementation of these rights had been neglected by the government up to the mid seventies, when the then chancellor Bruno Kreisky ordered to implement the provision for bilingual street signs in Southern Carinthia. These signs were demounted in a mass turmoil organised by the “Kärntner Heimatdienst”, a right wing German nationalist anti minority pressure group with strong historical connections to the NSDAP (cf. Perchinig 1989: 131ff.). Violent blast and arson attacks against memorials and offices of both sides characterised the following years. To appease the conflict, chancellor Kreisky installed an expert-commission, which called for a “special census” defining the number of minority members and drafted the “Ethnic Groups Act” granting group-rights to autochthonous ethnic minorities in Austria, which was passed by all parliamentary parties, including the Freedom Party (FPÖ).

But the conflict could not be held within the parliamentary arena any more. Socialised in the end of the sixties, younger activists began to forge a coalition of catholic, protestant and left-wing youth and students’ organisations and the left wing of the Socialdemocratic Party. Effectively arguing the connexion of linguistic rights in the State Treaty with the involvement of Carinthian Slovenes in the fight against Nazism, commitment for minority rights became a decisive political issue not only for the left, but also for catholic organisations, who met in the “solidarity committees” for the Slovene minority and formed a new kind of social movement. One of the reasons for the success of this emerging new social movement was the strong link of the conflict with history. On the one hand, the “Kärntner Heimatdienst” and other organisations campaigning against minority rights had strong links to a Nazi-past and to right wing extremism, whereas many Carinthian Slovenes had actively fought in the Yugoslav Partisan Army and were politically supported by Yugoslavia, then a model of a “human kind” of socialism well respected among the academic left.

At the same time the influence of the students’ revolution led to a growing interest in the role of Austrians in the Nazi-regime, and many students questioned their parents about their past. As many Slovenes had been involved in the fight against the Nazis, their narrative could serve as a model for identification with a “better part” of Austria – and for many also as a model for a “better father”⁴.

This new coalition organised a boycott of the planned special census leading to the result that more Slovenes would live in Vienna than in Carinthia. This symbolic victory laid the foundation stone for a gradual shift in the public understanding of the role of ethnic groups: Whereas in the sixties and seventies the majority of Austrians stressed the “German” character of Austria, a positive esteem of

⁴ Needless to say that this counter-narrative oppressed the discussion of atrocities committed by the Yugoslav Partisan Army, which became a recurring issue in the campaigns of the German-nationalist organisations. Research on this topic only began in the mid nineties by a joined Slovene and Austrian historians commission.

the existence of traditional, autochthonous minorities began to characterise the discourse on Austrian “national identity” in the eighties and nineties. A positive view of the traditional minorities went well together with the growing interest in the multinational Habsburg Empire. So Austrian national identity was reconnected with its Habsburg past, and this discourse helped to downgrade Austria’s involvement into National Socialism. The narrative of the “Deutsche Kulturnation” was not convenient for Austria’s image cultivation anymore, which now relied on the more fashionable notion of a long lasting tradition of cultural diversity.

Even within the Freedom Party, references to the “Austrian nation” gradually began to replace the traditional “German” orientation. Under the heading “Österreich zuerst” (priority for Austria), this “Austrian nationalism” was made instrumental in a major anti-immigrant campaign of the FPÖ arguing in favour for a reduction of rights for immigrants, whereas at the same time the FPÖ tried to improve its relations to the “autochthonous” minorities. As Carinthian governor, Jörg Haider installed an “ethnic minorities office” within the provincial administration in Carinthia and a “Carinthian Institute for Ethnic Studies” that was to present Carinthia as a model for ethnic relations in Central Europe.

This switch of narratives was also reflected in scientific research. During the eighties, a huge variety of critical studies on the situation of the autochthonous groups was published. In this context, Peter Gstettner and Dietmar Larcher of the Institute of Pedagogics at the University of Klagenfurt, the capital of the province of Carinthia, developed a research focus on bilingual education and intercultural pedagogics, but without reference to immigration. Intercultural pedagogics also had become a focus of research at the “Pedagogical Institute” of the City of Vienna, where teachers and teacher trainers were developing alternatives to the existing framework of “Ausländerpädagogik”. Seizing a minimal opportunity, they succeeded in convincing the ministry of education to introduce intercultural education as an educational principle and to install team teaching in many Viennese schools. Although these two institutions were working in a comparative field, they had little contact until the beginning of the nineties. It was only then that some researchers working on the “autochthonous” minorities became aware of the issue of immigration and started to question their theoretical concepts, which often were based on the tradition of “völkisch” thinking around the late Theodor Veiter, who held a professorship of international law in Innsbruck. Until today, there is only a weak link between the research community working on autochthonous groups and migration researchers, and often the concepts of ethnicity applied are quite different, with a focus on sociological concepts in the field of migration research and a dominance of legal research and primordial concepts of ethnicity in the research on “autochthonous” minorities.

The institutional framework

As already mentioned, the development of migration research in Austria strongly depended on a few researchers, most of them political scientists and sociologists, who started work in the field in the early eighties. Until now, migration research stays at the margin of academia. There is one institute devoted to migration policy (ICMPD), which is organised as an intergovernmental organisation and

concentrates on consultancy to governments and international bodies. In the academic area, there is neither an institute nor a specific journal for migration research. Research on migration and integration is more or less regularly pursued at four or five non-university institutes, their research efforts concentrate on applied research and depend on project funding by the ministries involved in migration policy making. Only one institute, the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research – again organised as an intergovernmental organisation –, runs a dedicated unit for migration research with five part-time researchers, who also mainly pursue applied research for the government or other public bodies. There might be at most some 10–15 people earning their living with migration research, with some 20–30 more doing work on migration issues from time to time. As a matter of fact, many people engaged in migration research do their research work in their spare time and earn their living as civil servants or employees of integration-projects or leave the research area after a few years.

Most research thus is devoted to a governmental research perspective (e.g. immigration control, labour-market integration, housing and social questions), and often scientific work is hampered by the dependency of research institutes on project funding. As freedom of access to information is not regulated by law in Austria, the funding ministries often prevent the publication of undesired results or put pressure on the scientists to reformulate their reports. Research on the internal developments of migrant communities, transnationalism, or antidiscrimination is underdeveloped and underfunded. Although EU-funded programmes like EQUAL (in which most of the researchers and institutes involved in the “Xenophobia” programme participate) provide the means for research on these topics, they do not change the dependency on project funding.

This marginalised and precarious position of migration research in the Austrian academic world has led to a mutual distrust between policy makers on the one hand and researchers on the other. As a study on the interaction between migration research and policy conducted by the ICMPD in 1998 has shown (ICMPD 1998), many researchers fear that their work will be misused by the government, while governmental officials suspect researchers to be keen on attacking migration policy decisions. Thus only a few researchers at state-funded institutes get privileged access to data on residence permits etc., which tends to divide the research community in two groups of “state-oriented” and “critical” researchers and results in a lack of exchange and discussion between them.

In order to promote a stronger focus on theoretical research, the Austrian Ministry of Sciences has initiated a working group on migration research at the Austrian Academy of Sciences that aims to improve communication and coordination within the research area by organising regular workshops and seminars. This working group has recently been transformed into a Commission for Migration and Integration Research, again located at the Austrian Academy of Sciences. This commission is the first institution in Austria’s academic world that focuses exclusively on migration research. It is telling that most of the funding for this endeavour has been provided by a private Swiss foundation and only a smaller part by the Austrian Academy of Sciences. Migration researchers in Austria do not only deal with phenomena of border crossing but have to cross borders to secure funding for their work – not only in this respect Austria still has not realised, that it has become one of the traditional European immigration countries.

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